



NOVEMBER 2018

# FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS

A L E T H E I A



## ABOUT US

The Aletheia staff chooses topics that pertain to the realities of our high school community. Each issue comprises of: firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni; a professional article relating to the theme; and resources compiled by the student staff. Additionally, this issue also features special submissions from parents that can be found near the end of the publication. Finalized issues are distributed in Lynbrook High School, uploaded online, and emailed to our subscribers. Past issues can be found on [lhsaletheia.com/archive](http://lhsaletheia.com/archive). The content in Aletheia is composed by the students of Lynbrook High School. Ideas and opinions expressed within the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Aletheia staff or the school administration.

## OUR MISSION

Aletheia (a-lay-thee-uh) means "truth" in Greek. We are a student outreach publication that strives to provide a voice for all students at Lynbrook High School in San Jose, California. Aletheia was created to facilitate communication and overcome stigmas concerning prevalent and taboo issues within Lynbrook.

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When I say "family," I am talking strictly about the people I live with. Those are my parents and siblings.

When I started high school, I had a girl squad of eight friends. If you would have asked me then who my family was, it would have been my friends. But after lots of drama ensued between us, we went our own ways. These girls I once thought were closer to me than my real family was, were now strangers. This really made me think.

All the while, my parents have been really supportive of me. And they have done so much. They paid so much money so I could live here since they thought it was the best place to grow up. They are going to pay my college tuition when we get there.

Their love for me really has been unconditional. I have done so many horrible things, and they still love me. One night, my parents got a call from the police station, informing them that I had been caught drinking. They came to get me, and even though they were obviously disappointed, it was clear that they still love me.

I still have close friends, but they're not family. Family is reserved for people way at the top.

To be honest, I barely even see most of my relatives as family. Just the people I live with.



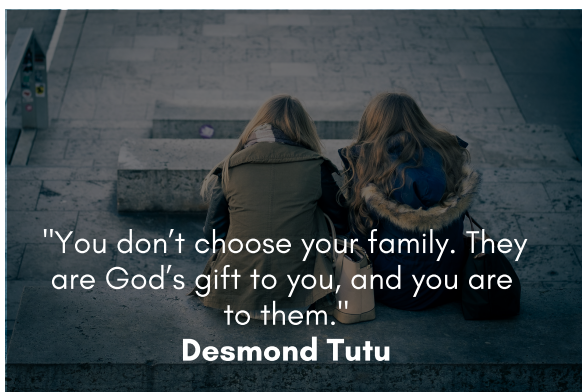
Before school started, I had the draft of a book I was writing done. The main character I created had a group of friends who she viewed as her family, and that is how I live. I view my group of friends as my family instead of my family. My friends are positive and supportive, but my family is always putting pressure on me. When I lost my writing account because of cyberbullying, my friends quickly cheered me up and told me that I could write better stories that more people would love. I guess that's true, but I've had a lot of writer blocks recently. However, they can't change my mind about the things my mother says. When I learned that I didn't get into my first elective choice, which never happened in middle school, my friends told me it was okay, but I kept telling them that it was my fault, just like my mother said.

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My mother has a habit of muttering to herself how terrible I am when she's pissed at me, and she always brings up the fact that I was too stupid to get into my first elective choice. "Only if you weren't retarded," she muttered once. I'm thankful that my friends keep telling me that I'm an amazing person and I shouldn't be put down, but they can't really control what happens in my brain. I am already broken by the lack of positivity my mother gives me, which causes me to have a negative attitude. I really wish I didn't receive such negative comments from my mother because I know that being negative won't help me in my future life. I doubt I can graduate, but I know that if I do, I'll be glad to be free from the criticism that broke me on the inside.

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Selfishly, I hate my parents with a passion. But when my mom grabbed my hand to cross the street yesterday, I clung on. I think I'm just afraid that I will lose them one day. And every dark thought that has crossed my mind suddenly is nothing compared to the potential losses.

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What is family? Family can be a lot of things. Family is a home. It's a place you can always return to. It's an unbreakable bond. But for me, family lies in friendships. I maintain a close relationship with the people in my family. And my friends are like family to me. A family must have complete trust in one another. Should any obstacle come, no matter it's difficulty, that familial trust should be able to get everyone through it. A family must also love each other. Not in a romantic way of course, but in the way that a parent loves a child, or a sibling loves a sibling. Storge is the Greek word that describes this exact type of love. A family must have storge, they must have love for one another. In a family, you don't always have to like each other, but you do have to love each other. If there is no love for one another, then it is not a family.

Whenever I get into a fight with my parents, my siblings, or my close friends, I may not like them in the moment, but I still love them. And when I get super angry, all I have to do is remember the good parts, and how much my family loves me, and I lose that anger. My family relationships, although they can be difficult sometimes, are still close and loving.

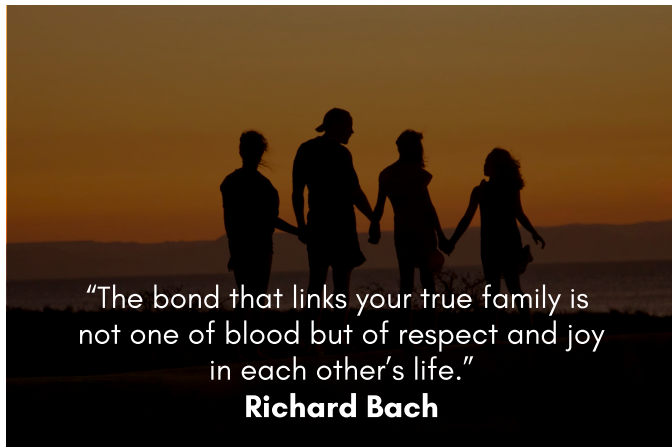
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Even when my mom is angry at me, I know I can still talk to her about anything. Same goes for my dad, any of my siblings, and any of my friends. My family has definitely shaped who I am. They've helped me decide smaller, trivial things, like my fashion taste, or my taste in music. They've helped develop larger things about me too, like my ideals, principles, and goals in life. And although some decisions have not been entirely helpful, I'm still grateful to them in the long run. My family right now, although flawed, is still amazing and loving. Even if I had the opportunity to change it, I would not. I love my family as it is.

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"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood but of respect and joy in each other's life."

**Richard Bach**

School is my safe haven. It is a temporary but blissful relief from the torturous realms of what many call their home. "Home" is not quite the word I would use- in fact, the word often catches on my tongue when I need to tell my friends that I must return home.

My house is just a shelter to me, a piece of ground where I am bound to and cannot escape from, regardless of whatever deeds I do. The thought should be reassuring, should make me feel comforted and give me a sense of stability. In fact, it does quite the opposite. I sit through long, boring counseling sessions telling me how school is stressful, how school can destroy me, etc. They say that when you have problems, you can simply turn to your teachers or your parents. I love my parents, my family. It's inevitable- we're related by blood. Not loving my family is considered a sin to my parents. That's easy for them to say, given that my dad is miles away from us and only my mom takes care of my sister and I. You'd think that I'd be thankful for my parents; one is off who knows where doing who knows what making money for us, and one is supposedly doing all she can to offer us a stable life. You see, my mom is heavily invested in my studies. My grades, my behavior, and my future is pretty much the only part of me she cares about. She often reassures me that if I get a bad grade because I didn't know something, or forgot homework once or twice, she wouldn't lose her temper- she would calmly explain to me what I needed to know and only hope that I would do better next time. It sounds nice, up until it actually happens.

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My worst subject is math, which is odd given that both my parents are skilled software engineers that excel in the subject. It's not that I don't try- it's that I often don't understand the concepts, and it takes me longer to understand, and that doing math puts me in a mopey mood. Once, I came back with a B on my math test. I wasn't proud, per se, but I wasn't completely disappointed either. I clutched the packet in my hand, hoping to get a chance to explain my mistakes and ask why they were wrong, but what I received was a long, deafening lecture on my results. Sure, it's normal for a parent to ridicule their child when they make mistakes. I only realized that what my mom brought on to me was not normal when she hit me hard, on my arm, when I couldn't understand what was a "simple concept" to her. She often compared me to other students, star students whom I could only dream of being on par with. The hit on the arm was quickly accompanied by loud screams, asking my why I couldn't just be like others and enjoy math. I muted myself, trying not to anger her more, but my act of consideration was interpreted as defiance, and I received another painful slap to the head. A few weeks later, the same situation ran itself, but with a different chapter math test. Attempting to talk it out civilly, I acknowledges my mistakes and my plan to try to get better at math.

I do not recall saying anything rash, for every conversation with either one of my parents must be carefully planned out, to not provoke them into another hour long presentation as to why I am such a misguided child. To my surprise, she seemed even more mad. I was accused of talking back, of not trying hard enough, of complaining about concepts I was just too lazy to study, when in reality, I was devoting myself to the only subject I hated just to please her. Aside from academics, politics and huge controversial topics are also conversations my mom loves to start. She often bashes the LGBTQ+ community, as well as insulting democrats and saying that people of color "deserve what they get". All I can do is sit and listen as my blood boils, since if I do as much as utter a single word of defense, I am sure to have to bear a mental beating afterwards. Parenting is just brainwashing to my mom- as long as I agree with her on every topic we discuss, then my opinions and feelings should not be considered. As a confused teenager, I am still not fully sure of my sexual orientation just yet. But because my family is so uptight about these subjects, I have no choice but to only be straight, or I may lose to 'right' to have parents. My feelings and problems as a person are never considered to my mom - only my insights on my grades.

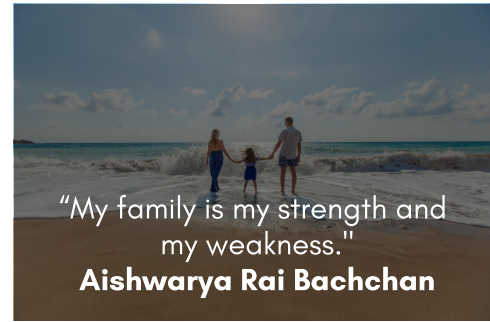
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Ever since early childhood, or to the extent that I can remember, I have never been close with my father. He was hot tempered, got angered easy, and was very, very stubborn. He was an unfaithful husband, a workaholic, and a terrible father. The only thing he ever does for my sister and I are transporting us to where we need to go, obviously on my mom's request. Casual conversation is always avoided, and whenever he does find a valid reason to come and talk to me, it is always about my career plans. I cherish the months when he is away, for I only need to listen to how disappointing I am from one parent. I don't have much to say about my father, since I haven't had much to do with him anyway. The only sense of comfort I find within my house is my dog. Though she may understand nothing of what I tell her, she still is there to listen, and that's all I ever needed from my parents. I realized a few year back that I would never get that, and maybe if I keep everything to myself that I wouldn't have to bear the burden of the possibility of hurting my parents' feelings. We care deeply about each other, but in a strained, tentative way. A single word out of place, and the string tying us all together would snap, destroying the only family I have created by blood relations.

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From a young age, my family has set of standard of excellence that I have tried my best to uphold. Not only do they expect me to achieve, they also guide me through this process. Both of my parents have helped me immensely, but the person who has shaped and impacted me the most is my father. Although I consider my achievements to be my own, without his aid, I doubt that I would have been anywhere close to where I am now.

Take, for example, my minor success in the area of math competitions. Strictly speaking, he started teaching me math at home ever since I could count. Out of distrust for the school system, he started teaching me long addition and subtraction and the times tables. At the end of fourth grade, he started to give me old Math Olympiad contests to do. Before this training, I would consistently score 2's and occasionally 3's. Through his guidance and instruction, by the end of the summer, I often got 4's or 5's, and in fifth grade, my final score was fourteen points better than my fourth grade score.

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Although I would like to believe these results were achieved through my hard work and persistence, the reality is that I was quite passive about this. I had zero passion for mathematics, though the honor that comes with high scores was quite enticing to my ten-year-old self. Every time my dad wanted me to practice math, I would reluctantly agree. He's kept at it all these years, and it's only because of his efforts (and a little bit of mine) that I don't completely suck at math now. Without his help, I think I would struggle even in school math.

Math wasn't the only thing my dad helped me with. Starting from the beginning of fourth grade, he occasionally took me running, though only for short distances. I started out with two laps around the field of my elementary school (about a total of 900 meters) and made my way up to a mile or four laps. I am not fast, never was, and never will be, but I still push myself because that's the mentality that my father has drilled into my brain.

Sometimes I wish that my parents won't fight... other times, I just wish there's less fighting in general.

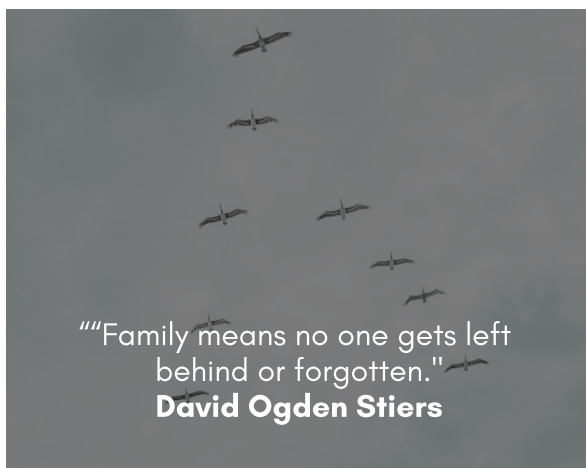
I know that my ideal family is a loving and supporting one, but what's considered a 'normal' family? One that encourages you to learn and thrive?

Do I have what a 'normal' family has?

Should it include family that screams every time they come together count? Should a family always be whole? Should the children have to hide when the parents start to raise their voices? Should the children have to lock their door, praying that no one comes to it and demands to be let in? Should the children have to comfort the mother after fights even though she frequently takes her anger out on the same children?

What about families that pursue excellence and nothing less than that? Should children have to endure long, extracurricular activities that they have absolute no interest in and wear them down to the bone? Should they have to carry the weight of more than 7 different classes outside of school? Should they stay up at 3 in the morning, thinking to themselves, "I could be doing something productive right now" when they have absolutely no energy left in them?

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Should they have to feel that their worth is equivalent to all their academic and extracurricular results? Should they have to dread coming home from school because they're just going to go directly to another class? Should they believe that they have nothing to live for if they slip up?

What about the things the children want to do? Should it be degraded and classified as 'useless'? Should they always have to hide everything they love from their parents?

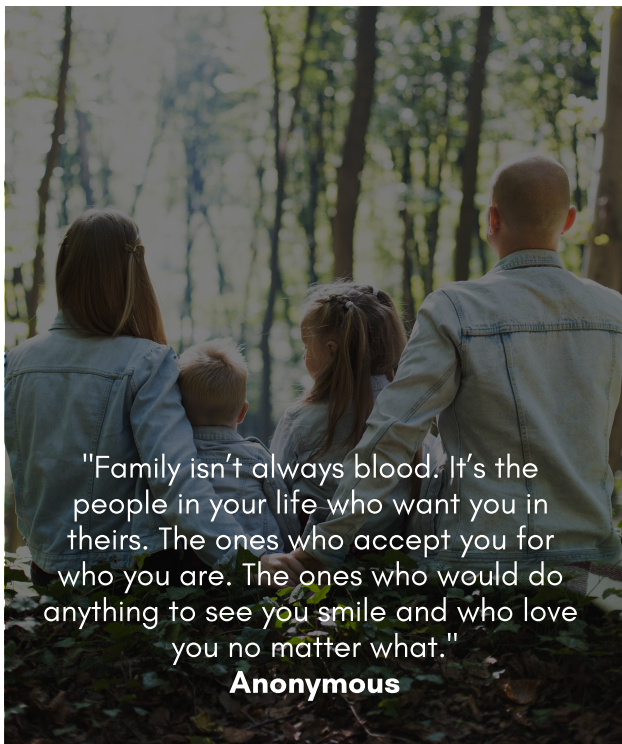
And I sometimes I think to myself.

In a family, is it selfish to say "What about me?"

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Honestly, family is earned. It's not blood it's the people who care about you. My friends are more of a family than I've ever had. As a kid my "family" used to leave me alone to play in my room and I haven't seen my mom in years. My family is broken so I built myself a better one with my friends. I trust them with my life more than Anyone else. My friends accept me for who I am and my own blood family doesn't.

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"Family isn't always blood. It's the people in your life who want you in theirs. The ones who accept you for who you are. The ones who would do anything to see you smile and who love you no matter what."

**Anonymous**

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\*The following submissions were written by parents in the Lynbrook Community.

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My family include my immediate children and parents, my in-laws, and the few adults in my lifetime outside of my relatives who have been called "aunt" or "uncle" to me but are really just close friends of my parents. My family is generally congenial, but we have passive aggressiveness in common. By contrast, my husband's family is very jovial, very outspoken, full of bluster and full of fun. There are serious rifts in his family and they are very public; there are smaller rifts in mine where the reaction is to avoid conflict.

Conflicts tend to cycle around control. There is an absolute "right" in our value system that is very hard to work with as children grow up and test their wings. I felt it as a child and teen and I see that same struggle in my kids. Despite efforts to not be like my parents, I seem to be doing the same stuff they did and I wince at it.

My children have conflict around resources, such as time on the computer, etc. They also are competitive with one another in sports, but this conflict is more impersonal.

I wish I didn't feel so invested in my children and their behaviors such that I could let them make mistakes more easily without fearing for them that their lives will be permanently ruined. I guess this is an extension of my own fear of failing and that it pretty much is always catastrophic, not reparable, and generally to be avoided at all costs.

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From my personal experience, I think there are many things we can do for improve our family relationships between students and parents:

1. Spend more time together.  
For example, besides normal family time, parents can volunteer at school events, and students can help parents to share chores, etc. All these activities can help us to exchange opinions, understand each other more, and reduce complains and wrong judgement.
2. Instead of always telling students what to do and how to do, parents should try to only provide reasonable guidance, give more freedom to students, allow them to gain their own experience and make their own choices, even though sometimes these may result in failures and mistakes. These are very necessary for children to learn and grow, so parents must give students the chances to learn, not always under our protection.

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For example, lack of sleep is a very common issue in high school students, therefore it's SO hard for them to get up on time for school every day. Before 10th grade, I always wake up my daughter an hour earlier, so she was never late for school. It seems good for everybody. But I realized that this won't work after she goes to college. I must let her to learn how to manage time well and go to school on time herself from now on. So since 10th grade, I decided to stop calling her in the morning, and asked her to use radio alarm and cell phone to get up herself. Then she got a few tardy in her school attendance records, but gradually she became better and better, rarely missed the 1st period. I am so happy that she is more mature and independent. It also improved our family relationship.

3. Parents should try more to listen to their students, instead of making quick judgement and giving suggestions. Before I didn't realize this is an issue in my family, until my daughter told me repeatedly. So afterwards, I've paid more attention, changed my attitude and behaviors, then it helped a lot in our family communications.

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# FAMILY

*PROFESSIONAL ARTICLE BY  
KATHY WHITE, MFT*

Definition: a group consisting of parents and children living together in a household; all the descendants of a common ancestor.

As a Marriage and Family Therapist, I frequently ponder about families. I also think a lot about my own family. I don't think that's strange at all. How much time do you think about your family?

From my professional experience, and my life experiences, I have learned that there are many ways to be a "family." Over time I have learned, both as a parent and a professional, that I tend to expand the definition of family. For example, my neighbors who have two elementary school age children call me and my husband, "Aunt" and "Uncle." That sounds like family to me.

I would expand the definition of family, such as children living in foster homes. And those children yearn to have "a real family... a real home."

It's intriguing to consider how I, and probably just about everyone, are shaped by our family experiences. And yet, with enough curiosity, we might think a bit more broadly about how this happens. Here's an example: A family member or a very close friend can give a nudge that enlightens a student. And possibly that nudge would influence decisions about what family means to both you and to others.

Communication is essential in families, and sometimes that creates conflict at times. Regarding changes, "You can't change anyone else, only yourself." I believe that communication is so important for any situation, and especially in the family. My suggestion is to ponder about how you communicate, and how you might take a bit of time to consider how that affects the family.

So, here is my suggestion about family: Take care of your family relationships, and when family gets difficult work on it.



To Engage a Child's Cooperation:

- Describe what you see, or describe the problem. "There's a wet towel on the bed."
- Give information. "The towel is getting my blanket wet."
- Say it with a word. "The towel!"
- Describe what you feel. "I don't like sleeping in a wet bed!"
- Write a note. *Please put me back so I can dry. Thanks! Your Towel*

As a Marriage and Family Therapist, I work with individuals, couples and families. There are many resources in the community that are available. You might consider contacting a professional, such as an MFT or an LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker).

From my perspective, I appreciate conflicts within families. My perspective is that without conflicts things can get even messier than they need to be. And conflict can actually be good. What I mean is that most of us are not twins, and so conflict can be natural. However, I was born in this country and my ancestors were from Western European countries. Others may see it differently.

The United States is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, and therefore families will bring to the US many flavors.

Overall, family is important.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*FAMILY SECRETS*

JOHN BRADSHAW

*THE SECRET OF PARENTING*

ANTHONY WOLF, PHD

*HOW TO TALK SO TEENS WILL LISTEN & LISTEN SO TEENS WILL TALK*

ADELE FABER & ELAINE MAZLISH